

GENERAL ORDERS, }
No. 207. }

WAR DEPARTMENT,
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, July 3, 1863.

I.. The attention of all persons in the military service of the United States is called to Article 7 of the cartel agreed upon on the 22d of July, 1862, and published in General Orders, No. 142, Sept. 25, 1862. According to the terms of this cartel, all captures must be reduced to actual possession, and all prisoners of war must be delivered at the places designated, there to be exchanged, or paroled until exchange can be effected. The only exception allowed is the case of commanders of two opposing armies, who are authorized to exchange prisoners or to release them on parole at other points mutually agreed upon by said commanders.

II.. It is understood that captured officers and men have been paroled and released in the field by others than commanders of opposing armies, and that the sick and wounded in hospitals have been so paroled and released, in order to avoid guarding and removing them, which in many cases would have been impossible. Such paroles are in violation of General Orders and the stipulations of the cartel, and are null and void. They are not regarded by the enemy, and will not be respected in the armies of the United States. Any officer or soldier who gives such parole will be returned to duty without exchange, and, moreover, will be punished for disobedience of orders. It is the duty of the captor to guard his prisoners, and if, through necessity or choice, he fail to do this, it is the duty of the prisoner to return to the service of his Government. He cannot avoid this duty by giving an authorized military parole.

III.. A *military parole* not to serve until exchanged must not be confounded with a *parole of honor* to do or not to do a particular thing not inconsistent with the duty of a soldier. Thus, a prisoner of war actually held by the enemy may, in order to obtain exemption from a close guard or confinement, pledge his parole of honor that he will make no attempt to escape. Such pledges are binding upon the individuals giving them; but they should seldom be given or received, for it is the duty of a prisoner to escape if able to do so. Any pledge or parole of honor extorted from a prisoner by ill usage or cruelty is not binding.

IV..The obligations imposed by the general laws and usages of war upon the non-combatant inhabitants of a section of country passed over by an invading army, cease when the military occupation ceases; and any pledge or parole given by such persons, in regard to future service, is null and of no effect.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Assistant Adjutant General.